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A LOST STARK COUNTY TOWN.

BY WILLIAM R. SANDHAM, WYOMING, ILLINOIS.

During the years between 1830 and 1840 there was a great mania in land speculation in the state of Illinois. One line of this speculation was the platting of town sites, and by extensive advertising selling lots at the highest possible profiteering prices. A great many of those towns proved to be in good locations and they are now prosperous villages and cities. A still greater number of those speculative paper towns have fallen by the wayside, and they have left scarcely a traditional remembrance. Several of such towns were laid out in Stark county. Among them we mention LaFayette, Wyoming, Slackwater, Massillon, Moulton and Osceola. Of them only LaFayette and Wyoming have become prosperous business centers. All the others have gone or are fast going out of the memory of nearly everybody. There is a tradition that some of the promoters and speculators in the Wyoming and Osceola town lots sent circulars broadcast through the eastern states, proclaiming the desirability of owning lots in those towns as they were bound to grow into large and prosperous cities. The tradition is that those circulars described both of those towns as being located at the head of navigation on Spoon river and that they already were growing commercial towns. The purpose of this article is to tell something about the lost town of Osceola and its founder, Major Robert Moore.

It is well known that in 1817 the United States government had the lands between the Illinois and Mississippi rivers surveyed as far north as the north boundary of what is now Mercer county, with the object of donating one hundred and sixty acres of land to each of the soldiers of the War of 1812. This piece of land was designated as the "Military Tract" by which name it is still known.

The United States by patent, February 9, 1818, conveyed to Daniel Crottnell, as a partial recompense for his services as a private in Ramsey's First Rifle Corps in the War of 1812, the southwest quarter of section twelve of what is now Elmira township, Stark county, Illinois. On June 22, 1819, Daniel Crottnell, then of Warren county, Ohio, conveyed the same quarter section to William Frye for sixty dollars. On April 22, 1822, William Frye then of Pike county, Illinois, conveyed the same quarter section to Elias Kent Kane of Kaskaskia, Illinois, for one hundred dollars. Elias Kent Kane, for whom Kane county, Illinois was named, was a cousin of Elisha Kent Kane of Arctic exploration fame, and was United States senator from Illinois from 1825 to 1835. On February 16, 1824, Elias Kent Kane conveyed the above described quarter section to Major Robert Moore of St. Genevieve, Missouri, for one hundred dollars. The same piece of land was sold for taxes, for \$2.69, in 1834, to Thomas Ford who was governor of Illinois from 1842 to 1846. The tract was redeemed by Major Moore and reconveyed to him February 10, 1836.

Some time in the early part of 1835 Major Robert Moore came to this part of Illinois to view his land and to become the operator of a ferry on the Illinois river at Peoria. As operator of the ferry he became acquainted with the Buswells, the Spencers and others who had come from Vermont, and the Halls who had come from England, to purchase and settle on lands in Illinois. Major Moore had a map which showed the unentered government lands in the north eastern part of what is now Elmira township in Stark county. He gave the land seekers such a glowing description of those lands that they then and there concluded to settle there or in that vicinity. As all who are versed in the history of Stark county well know, those people whom Major Moore induced to settle in what is now Stark county, came to be among the most prosperous and the most highly respected residents of the county, and their highly prized characteristics have come down to their descendants who are now living in the county.

Major Robert Moore with the assistance of the county surveyor of Putnam county, of which the land that is now Elmira township was then a part, surveyed and platted a town site on the foregoing described quarter-section. He named it

Osceola after the Seminole warrior Osceola, the Indian leader in the Florida Indian war. There were four others, James C. Armstrong, Thomas J. Hurd, D. C. Enos and Edward Dickenson, who were associated with Major Moore in the promotion and sale of lots in the new town. The new town as platted consisted of forty-eight blocks of ten lots each, with a large "Washington Square" in the center. The plat was dated July 7, 1836, and was recorded on page 278 in book D, in the recorder's office in Hennepin, the County seat of Putnam county.

The exalted hopes of Major Moore and his associates ended in disappointment, for the reason that the people who came to settle in this part of Illinois, preferred to make their homes in and near the groves a short distance west of the new town. Some time during the latter part of 1837 a post office was established about a mile west of the Osceola town site, and named Elmira after Elmira, New York, the former home of Oliver Whitaker the first post master. In 1845 that post office was moved to the west side of Spoon river and the name was moved with it. Some years later another post-office was established on the first site of the Elmira office and named Osceola. A village grew up around the post office, which has since been known as Osceola. The large grove in the vicinity naturally took upon itself the name of Osceola grove.

Major Moore sold all his interest in the Osceola town site and in the quarter section on which it was located May 2, 1839, just two months after the county of Stark was created. His son, James Madison Moore, owned a one-half interest in the quarter section from February 25, 1841, to April 21, 1842. The record books in the recorder's office in Toulon show that the Osceola town site was vacated by the owners, Isaac Spencer, Timothy Carter and Oliver Whitaker. The vacating deed was filed for record July 16, 1845. The vacation of the Osceola town site was legalized by the Illinois General Assembly in February, 1855. The quarter section on which was located the lost town of Osceola is now productive farm land.

Major Robert Moore, the founder of the lost town of Osceola, was born in Franklin county, Pennsylvania, October 2, 1781. He was married to Miss Margaret Clark, who was

also a native of Franklin county, Pennsylvania, April 18, 1805. He served as a soldier in the War of 1812, and later as a major of militia in Pennsylvania. In 1822 he and his family moved to St. Genevieve county, Missouri. He was a Justice of the Peace in that state for several years, and a member of the Missouri legislature in 1831 and 1832. In 1835 he moved to Illinois and became the operator of a ferry at Peoria, and the founder of the lost town of Osceola as heretofore stated. From all the information obtainable it is evident that Major Moore and his family lived for a time in Stark county.

Some time during the year 1839 Major Robert Moore moved to Oregon, leaving his wife at the home of a son in St. Louis, Missouri, while he prepared a new home in that far distant territory. It has been authoritatively stated that Major Moore was with one of the first parties that went to Oregon by crossing the mountains which are between the Mississippi river and the Pacific ocean. He bought government land near the Willamette river, about fifty miles south of Portland. Mrs. Moore died at the home of her son in St. Louis before the new home in Oregon was ready for occupancy. Major Moore died in Linn county, Oregon, September 1, 1857. In her history of "Stark County and Its Pioneers" Mrs. Eliza Hall Shallenberger said this: "Major Moore was an intelligent and active business man, ever ready to take advantage of circumstances, and fond of adventure."

Major Robert Moore's son, James Madison Moore, lived in Stark county for several years. He moved to Oregon about 1842. Robert Morrison Moore, Major Robert Moore's youngest son, was born in Chester county, Pennsylvania, August 26, 1820. He came to what is now Stark county, Illinois, with his father about 1837. He was married October 14, 1844, to Miss Maria White, daughter of Hewes White who was the pioneer blacksmith of Elmira township. Mr. White moved to Toulon in 1847. Mr. and Mrs. Robert Morrison Moore lived in Elmira township until the death of Mrs. Moore, March 9, 1874. A short time after the death of his wife Mr. Moore moved to Toulon, where he lived until the time of his death, January 29, 1890. His youngest son, James Corydon Moore, who is well known in Stark county, now lives in San Diego, California.